

CITY OF STAMFORD 19TH CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION CITY DEPARTMENTS COMMITTEE

Clemon Williams, Chair

Members

Frances Lane

Thomas Lombardo

JR McMullen

Anthony Pramberger

MINUTES

**Tuesday, November 1, 2022
7:00pm**

The meeting was held remotely.

1. Meeting was called to order at 7:02pm
2. Roll Call – All committee members were present
3. Discussion with Town Clerk, Lyda Ruijter

Ms. Ruijter indicated that she has also spoken to another Committee. In Ms. Ruijter's view the Town Clerk position should be closely reviewed given the total scope of the responsibilities of the Town Clerk and the complete lack of specificity for the position in the Charter.

In Ms. Ruijter's view the Town Clerk should be a counterweight to make good decisions in government. According to Ms. Ruijter we need to look at the Charter and make specific changes, specifically, the Town Clerk needs access to information. As it stands now, her office is an afterthought and their requests for information are all too often brushed aside. The Town Clerk wants to increase the budget for the Town Clerk Office. She wants more access to more support. She needs more access to people and resources. One of the issues has to do with the request for more IT support. As the technology becomes more sophisticated, the Town Clerk's Office needs more support from IT. They need a dedicated technology person for the Town Clerk's Office. They need more help for software upgrades and development. The software comes from the State, and we do not currently have the support for training. The City needs to provide resources for the office.

The other big issue is an automatic response system to answer questions that come in. Most of the questions are perfunctory and can be answered through an automated response system. If this were done her staff would be able to devote more time to other functions. However, currently there is no staff to deal with the issues.

Currently, all of the money that goes to the Town Clerk's Office comes from the City, but the duties come from the State.

The HR process currently in place is a problem. There is a problem in creating new positions that are not within the control of the unions. In Waterbury the Charter creates such a system. We need to look at this. There are some positions that are named in the Charter and are outside of the unions and Ms. Ruijter believes this should be the case in the Town Clerk's Office.

We may need to talk to the outside attorney and see if there is a way to make changes in the Charter so that we can deal with the needs of the Town Clerk's Office.

a. **Charter at Sec. C2-10-7. – Records** provides:

*The Board of Representatives shall appoint a Clerk who shall keep a record of the resolutions and other proceedings of such Board and shall have custody of its correspondence, files, and other records. **When ordered by the Board, such records shall be filed with the Town and City Clerk and open for public inspection at reasonable hours.***

The City Departments Committee wants to know what steps are being taken to digitize City records to expand public access to these records, including (but not limited to) the voting records of elected officials. Also, we would like to know what steps are being taken to make these records available to citizens with disabilities. The Town Clerk addressed this issue and said that her office is endeavoring to make more information available in other formats, but unfortunately she does not have the staff or budget to address this issue properly.

b. **Charge number 5. deals with § C4-10.1 which provides - Responsibilities and Duties of the Town and City Clerk** which provides:

The Town and City Clerk shall perform those duties which are imposed upon Town Clerks by law, and shall also be the Registrar of Births, Marriages, and Deaths and shall exercise all the powers and discharge all the duties conferred and imposed upon such registrars by law.

The City Departments Committee wants to know if there is a need for a deputy Town Clerk given the breadth of the Town Clerk's responsibilities. The Town Clerk believes that we need to add this position. We currently have a Deputy Town Clerk, but no Assistant Town Clerk. She suggested that the Town Clerk has one Special Assistant. The Deputy Town Clerk is a unionized position. In dealing with the issue of adding a position we will have to consider budget implications.

There is a big difference between Assistant Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk, and in Ms Ruijter's view this is something that should be addressed in the Charter. The Town Clerk went on to state that the statutes are old, and they have not kept pace with changes that address the needs of a City the size of Stamford, or changes in technology. We need to develop a system to keep the functions of the Town Clerk up to date.

- c. Charge 5b asked the City Departments Committee to address the need of archiving City records. The Committee would like to know what is being done to archive City records and whether the Town Clerk has sufficient staff to address this issue.

Digitization is costly. The guideline from the State is that we need to do more than simply put information on the website. We need to get the old records online. The old records are not online and they did not keep paper copies of the old records when the City changed its electronic record keeping system. The legislative officer for the Board of Representatives and Board of Finance Office have good records. However, they are not archived electronically.

In other cities the Town Clerk deals with all the Committees and maintains the records for various Boards and Commissions in the City.

We need to put in place a system where the Town Clerk should be responsible for maintaining records. Now we have a duplication of some functions, but no one or office is responsible for coordinating the records.

According to the Town Clerk here in Stamford there is no centralization of the Minutes and Agendas for the various Boards and Commissions.

Commissioner Pramberger brought up two issues:

- 1) Making a change dealing with who the Mayor has to notify when he/she is out for more than 48 hours. The Town Clerk believes that we should make the change to the notification to make sure that the Town Clerk is notified when the Mayor is out of the area.

- 2) Making changes in the oath of office. The Town Clerk believes that this position of Town Clerk should continue to be allowed to give oaths. Moreover, The Town Clerk should also maintain a record of all administration of oaths.

These issues were discussed briefly; however, no decisions were reached.

4. Review grid on Charter Issues for accuracy and recommendation to the full Charter Review Commission. The grid was discussed and will be revised.
5. New Business – None
6. The Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:04 pm.

This meeting is available on [video](#).